



Info@starklawlibrary.org

Stark County Law Library Association

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BEGINNERS

Why Use a Database?

The email address, info@starklawlibrary.org really works! TRY IT!!

What is a database? Remember how well spread-sheets acted as “number crunchers” well, databases are the real “information crunchers” of the digital world. Databases manage and manipulate structured information. I am going to borrow a great example of a database from the GeekGirls:



Consider that most ubiquitous of databases – the phone book. The phone book contains several items of information – name, address and phone number – about each phone subscriber in a particular area. Each subscriber’s information takes the same form.

In database parlance, the phone book is a table which contains a *record* for each subscriber. Each subscriber record contains three *fields*: name, address, and phone number. The records are sorted alphabetically by the *name field*, which is called the *key field*.¹

A database allows you to easily and efficiently store, retrieve and modify data regardless of the amount of data being manipulated.

A lawyer’s address book needs a few more fields than the above mentioned phone book. For instance, it is always a good idea to break the

name field into *first name* and *last name*. Of course you are going to use *last name* to find the pager number of a certain client, but suppose you had one of those “senior moments” when you could picture the client you worked with last year, but could only remember that her name was Kathy. Sorting (filtering) by the *first name field* will give you a short list of all the Kathys you have had as clients. If that isn’t delineating enough, you can do a secondary sort (or filter using two criteria) and check the Contacts field to see when you last met with each Kathy.

If you want to get a head start and look around creating a database in Microsoft Works, we will be using “Introduction to the Microsoft Works Database” by Alan Zisman at <<http://www.zisman.ca/database/>>.

If you have Microsoft Access, we will be using the Florida Gulf Coast University Tutorial at: <<http://www.fgcu.edu/support/office2000/access/index.html>>. You may want to look at “Getting Started”, “Screen Layouts,” and “Database Records”.

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INTERMEDIATE

Client Newsletters



The article “12 Tips for Publishing Client Newsletters.” by David Freedman appeared in *Law Practice Management*, September 2002, on page 28. The following is a brief summary of the article.

Here are a dozen ways to ensure that your newsletter gets opened, read, underlined, highlighted, photocopied, passed around, quoted from, responded to and appreciated.²

Tip #1: Keep the marketing objective narrow.

Each newsletter can accomplish only one marketing objective. Write about a new practice area or show the breath of your firms’ expertise, but not both!

Tip #2: Make sure the editor understands the marketing objective.

Be sure to emphasize that the goal of your newsletter is to attract and retain clients and that all content should be aimed toward that goal.

Tip #3: Pretend that it’s a commercial newsletter.

“Every article must be written and edited as though you’re selling the publication. The writing must be excellent and the information extremely valuable. Don’t assume people will read it just because it lands in their mailbox.”

Tip #4: Keep news about your firm and its members to a minimum.

“Provide information that readers can use to make more money and stay out of trouble.”

Tip #5: Cover your topics in depth.

Briefly covering many topics in one article appears superficial and may suggest that the author doesn’t know enough to be specific.

Tip #6: Be specific.

“Provide definitions, examples, hypothetical cases, anecdotes, analogies and the like, so that all concepts are crystal clear.” If your article becomes unwieldy it is a sign that you need to further narrow the topic.

Tip #7: Respond to your readers’ changing needs.

Instead of using fax-back polls or e-mail to solicit readers comments and suggestions, include an “Ask the Expert” column in your newsletter. Then make it a habit to phone a few clients each week and personally ask about their concerns and questions. Be prepared to fax them their answer instead of making them wait for the newsletter! “Other ways to keep abreast of your readers’ needs include reading what they read, listening to what they listen to and watching what they watch. Also, attend the seminars that your readers attend. This is more than a good way to get to know their needs - it also gives you, and your newsletter, visibility.”

Tip #8 Give the reader many points of entry.

Include many types of columns (sidebars, news briefs, etc) and make each headline compelling. “The more headlines you have, the greater the chance that readers will see something

Remember that a newsletter *can* reinforce your reputation, but it *cannot* substitute for personal contact with clients and prospective clients.

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Client Newsletter (Continued)

that appeals to them and get involved in the newsletter.”

Tip #9: Include a response mechanism.

Offer to mail or fax additional material on specific topics covered in the newsletter. “Get readers accustomed to dialing your phone number.”

Tip #10: Be punctilious. “Good grammar, punctuation and style show that you care about the quality of work that leaves your office.”

Tip #11: No gratuitous graphics.

White space is much better than unrelated clipart.

Tip #12: Send the newsletter to “thought leaders.”

Add colleagues, professional and trade associations, libraries, college departments, regulatory agencies and reporters who cover your practice area, to your subscription list, then ask for feedback.

ADVANCED

A Postcard ?

Think of the postcard as another means of meeting the goal of Tip #9 in the Intermediate section. As reply cards, mini-newsletters, or announcements, postcards have multiple advantages over other means of contacting customers.

- Their size makes them less expensive to produce and mail.
- Recipients are more likely to read a postcard.
- They are more convenient to fill out and return than other response devices.

As annoying as we may find those multiple reply cards that fall out of our magazines, publishers will tell you that the response they generate far outweighs the nuisance factor.

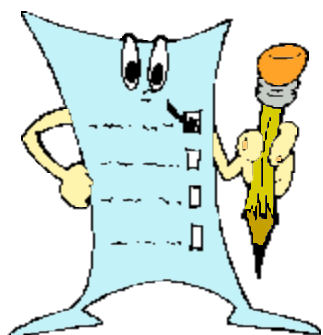
Even on a small scale, reply cards work wonders. The first time *The INK Spot* used postcard-sized subscription cards, both new subscriptions and renewals increased noticeably in just a couple of months.³

Of course we are not trying to sell magazines, but we are selling our reputation as a source of useful information and valuable advice. Putting a response-style postcard in your newsletter offering more information on each of your articles, your clients can mark a check-box and drop the card in the mail. You have contact with your client twice and he/she gets the information they are seeking.

Increase the effectiveness of your postcards with one or more of these techniques:

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A Postcard? (Continued)



- Prepaid return postage.
- Pre-addressed return address on card or a pre-addressed envelope.
- Color. Neon-bright paper, pre-printed paper, or photo-postcards attract attention.
- Check-boxes that allow the recipient to quickly fill out order forms or surveys.
- Include your mailing address, phone number, or other alternate contact information on the card.
- Repeat any special marketing message that is found in accompanying marketing materials.
- Always tell the recipient what to do with the card "Fill it out & drop it in the mail" may seem obvious, but say it anyway. It works.⁴

As a mini-newsletter, your postcards can "brand" you and your firm. Once you have created a theme or logo for your postcards, they will become easily remembered and more likely to be read than other forms of marketing.

Another advantage of postcards - they don't waste people's time - they don't even have to open an envelope to read your message.

An added benefit for your firm is that postcards are inexpensive to print. You can send your copy to a printer or design four cards on one 8 1/2 x 11 sheet of paper, print the design onto card stock, then cut the sheet into four cards.⁵

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ "Databases from Scratch I: Introduction." Geekgirl.talk: Plain-English Computing. 1998. Rose Vines. 7 Feb 2003. <http://www.geekgirls.com/databases_from_scratch_1.htm>
- ² Freedman, David M. "12 Tips for Publishing Client Newsletters." *Law Practice Management*, September 2002, at 28
- ³ & ⁴ Bear, Jacci Howard. "Increase Sales with Postcards." Desktop Publishing. 2003. About, Inc. 7 Feb 2003. <http://desktoppub.about.com/library/inkspot/bl_post_001.htm>
- ⁵ Retallick, Martha. "10 Good Reasons to Market with Postcards." Graphic Design. 2003. About, Inc. 7 Feb 2003 <<http://graphicdesign.about.com/library/weekly/aa013103a.htm>>